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BTL 25th ANNIVERSARY

Between THE Lines

'Small but Mighty' Couple Wins Allies of the Year

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FLASHING BACK TO THE PAST:

DECEMBER – The Black Press

KICK! magazine, published by Kick Publishing Company, hit newsstands on Dec. 1. As the third black LGBT media company established in America, the publication run by Editor-in-Chief Curtis Lipscomb and his staff was created to inform the LGBT community of issues relative to LGBT African Americans.

JUNE – Marchers Protest and Party in Lansing

On June 12, over 5,000 people marched, rallied, and celebrated outside the state Capitol in Lansing for Stonewall 25: Pride, Protest & Celebration organized by volunteers of the Pride March '94 Committee.

FEBRUARY – Worldwide Sport and Cultural Event

Team Great Lakes organized more than 125 Michigan athletes for Gay Games IV in June in New York City. This was a huge leap from the 26 known to have taken part in the 1990 Gay Games in Vancouver. Michigan athletes were strongly represented in swimming, tennis, and running.

DECEMBER – Sister Love

Independent, grassroots organization, A. Lorde Collective, established to affirm the identity of lesbians of African descent. Its membership consisted of self-identified black lesbians from across the state of Michigan although it was predominantly made up of Detroiters.

JANUARY – Gays and AIDS on the Big Screen

Between The Lines was the first Michigan newspaper to review the film "Philadelphia." The Michigan Campaign for Human Dignity and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force presented a special pre-screening on Jan. 12 at the AMC Maple.

THE EVOLUTION OF ELLEN

Start of Something Big – Stand-up comedian Ellen DeGeneres - once Showtime's "Funniest Person in America" - scores her own ABC sitcom "Ellen" in 1994. The show builds popularity and more than 40 million people tuned in to watch DeGeneres come out in "The Puppy Episode," making her the first openly lesbian character on television. Further, DeGeneres is featured on the cover of Time magazine's April 14, 1997, issue, when she unabashedly declared: "Yep, I'm Gay."

Out and Off – "Ellen" explored various LGBT issues during its fifth season as ratings continued to decline. Conservatives launched a campaign to push advertisers to pull out and Disney-owned ABC cancelled the show in 1998, though "The Puppy Episode" would eventually win a Peabody and an Emmy.

One More Try – CBS picked up "The Ellen Show" from 2001-2002. DeGeneres once again played a lesbian character with co-star heavyweights Cloris Leachman and Martin Mull. This is after DeGeneres had returned to her stand-up comedy roots. She wrote an HBO special titled "Ellen DeGeneres: The Beginning" that left out any overtly gay or political humor. Despite good reviews, CBS cancelled the variety show after just 13 episodes.

A New Approach – In 2003, DeGeneres wrote another HBO special "Ellen DeGeneres: Here and Now," and introduced herself to a new generation of potential fans as the voice Dory in the Pixar movie "Finding Nemo." That same year, her current talk show, "The Ellen DeGeneres Show," debuted on NBC. It has won dozens of Emmys.

Top of the World – DeGeneres is one of the biggest entertainers in the world worth an estimated $360 million. She has hosted the Oscars, the Emmys and the Grammys. She has appeared as a guest judge on American Idol, written four books, launched a clothing line, has her own production company, record label, home and lifestyle brands, and more. Her show celebrates 15 years and earns a reported $50 million annually. In 2016, President Barack Obama awarded DeGeneres the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest honor for a civilian in the U.S.

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Motor City Pride: Rainbows Abound, Defying Rain

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

Democratic Gubenatorial candidate Gretchen Whitmer marched in the Motor City Pride parade on Sunday, June 10. Photo: Tih Penfil

Though a rainy, early-June chill swept through the city of Detroit on Saturday, June 9 and Sunday, June 10, rainbow-clad attendees made it out to Motor City Pride in droves. And to first-time pride-goers like Grayson Brenner and Rose Ray, the weekend might as well have been sunny and 75 F.

"Honestly, I've always wanted to be able to come to any pride event because all these people from different cultures and backgrounds just come together and kind of just find that one thing in common," Brenner said. "We're all part of the LGBTQ community and even just being allies we can come together and be happy with who we are."

Ray, having traveled all the way from Michigan's UP, said that it was worth the "really cool experience" to have such a large and diverse pride festival.

According to event organizer Dave Wait, Motor City Pride provides an annual opportunity for Detroit to foster inclusivity within both its LGBTQ and allied communities.

"Motor City Pride is a celebration of the strength and diversity of Michigan's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer community that is second to none," Wait said. "It is the largest such gathering of our community in the state, and represents a unique opportunity to come together to mark our accomplishments and rededicate ourselves to the work left to do."

And this year the event hosted thousands of guests, featured a record 140 vendors and more than 50 entertainers from across Michigan and out of state, headlined by '80s pop icon Tiffany. And demonstrating the festival's continued growth, were many LGBTQ-affirming businesses and organizations making their pride debut like Miss Ladi Boutique.

"Miss Ladi Boutique is an online women's boutique. We sell clothing, jewelry, handbags and a different array of products – also some sunglasses. This is our first year. We've been around since November of last year, and we saw Motor City Pride online and we thought it would be a great place to go. This is our first big event that we have had," said one of the booth's volunteers. "We're based out of Detroit and I'm excited about showing our products at pride, meeting new people and getting new customers."

And of course, the festival was host to many pride veterans like Corktown Health Center.

"I'm so excited that we are able to be here outreaching to the LGBTQ community and letting them know that there is a clinic especially for this group and that we can provide care to them and support them on their journey, wherever they may be," said Nurse Practitioner Patrice Wade-Olsen. "We're really excited to be here and to provide really culturally competent care and expertise to this community."

Motor City Pride Festival-goers on Saturday, June 9. BTL Photos: Andrew Potter

"Really it is our goal to see the elimination of health disparities along LGBTQ-identified people, families and those we serve," added director Theresa Roscoe.

Saturday's events started at 12:30 p.m. with performances by groups like Little Animal, Acoustic Ash and DVJ Mark. Saturday's otherwise energetic festivities were punctuated with a poignant reminder of the 2016 Pulse nightclub shooting with a reflective vigil at 2 p.m., presided over by Metropolitan Community Church Detroit's own Rev. Roland Stringfellow. Included in Motor City Pride's remembrance of the event was a message board for people to write positive notes of support. Pride attendee Katie Marquette said that the deliberate look back at the tragic event served as a great reminder of the power of the LGBTQ community to band together.

"I think for the community, violence is something that is not new, and I think that event was something that really hurt us and was really painful, but it's always really good to stop by, to read the messages. It reminds you that you're part of the community," Marquette said. "And even though no one here

See Motor City Pride, page 8

Dazzling Event Celebrates BTL's 25th Anniversary

BTL STAFF REPORT

DETROIT – Between The Lines celebrated 25 years of continuous publication at a gala party June 8. Over 250 people attended – advertisers, writers, current and former staff members, graphic artists, ad sales representatives, consultants, supporters and more. The event was in the magnificent Pewabic House & Garden Show venue, a huge outdoor tented area created for Pewabic's annual Maker/Mentor exhibition featuring works by over 80 ceramic artists. Guest mingled, sipped cocktails, munched on delicious hors d'oeuvres and desserts and shopped for exquisite Pewabic tiles and pottery on display.

The program started with presentations of BTL Legacy Awards to 13 local businesses who have consistently advertised in BTL since the early days of the paper to the present day. "It is not hyperbole to say that BTL could not exist without the strong, consistent support of our advertisers," said co-publisher Jan Stevenson. "We thank you for your advertising support – and we're ready to sign you up for another 25 years!" she joked.

Legacy award winner Keith Orr from aut Bar in Ann Arbor said, "A free press is so important – especially in the times we are in now. But – a free press is not free. There are bills to pay and we have to support it, which is why we are glad to support BTL with our ads."

Gerry Banister from RE/MAX Real estate described BTL as an important institution in the LGBTQ community. "You have no idea how important BTL has been to so many people – you have made a huge difference in so many lives."

Co-publishers Stevenson and Susan Horowitz then thanked the dozens of people who have contributed to BTL's success. "We started to create a sign with everyone's name who has contributed to BTL over the past quarter century. It came to over 300 people and we got totally overwhelmed! So we gave up on the sign and instead we thank everyone en masse," said Stevenson. "Each of you have contributed to the success of the paper – and for many it represents just one small part of your total contributions to the LGBTQ community as a whole – thank you!"

Then Stevenson and Horowitz made a special announcement.

"However, there is one person we feel the need to single out for his extraordinary commitment, and contribution to BTL – since the very beginning of the paper in 1993. That's why we are pleased and honored to present this Lifetime Achievement Award to our dear friend, writer, artist, supporter, champion and hero – Charles Alexander." The award recognized Alexander for his well-written stories and spectacular artwork. "Between The Lines is lucky and grateful that you have contributed so much to the life of the paper, and the entire LGBTQ community is much the better as a result of your immense contributions of time and talent," read the award.

BTL honored 13 Legacy advertisers who have supported the paper since its inception in 1993. Photo Andrew Cohen.

Writer and artist Charles Alexander received BTL's Lifetime Achievement Award from co-publishers Jan Stevenson and Susan Horowitz. See award on page 15. Photo courtesy of Ojetta Brown

The final presentations were of the 2018 AdPop Awards for Excellence in Advertising to the LGBTQ community. The National LGBTQ Media Association, sponsor of the third annual AdPop award, selected nine of BTL's advertisers to receive this prestigious award. The ads were chosen based on their artistic design, positive portrayal of LGBTQ people and strong messaging to and for the LGBTQ community.

BTL Legacy Award Winners:

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The Ark, Ann Arbor

aut Bar and Common Language
Braun Court, Ann Arbor
Keith Orr and Martin Contreras

Gerry Banister, Birmingham
RE/MAX SE Michigan

Dr. Paul Benson
Be Well Medical Center, Berkley

Hodges Subaru, Ferndale

Holiday Market, Royal Oak

Joe Kort, Ph.D. and Associates
The Center for Relationship and Sexual Health, Royal Oak

Lynn Stange, Troy
Real Estate One

Triangle Chiropractic, Grosse Pointe
Dr. John Tsakos

Trillium Real Estate, Ann Arbor
Linda Lombardini & Sandi Smith

Ron. T. Williamson DDS, Berkley

2018 AdPop Award Winners:

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Novi

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East Lansing

Michigan Department of Health & Human Services
Brogan & Partners, Advertising Agency
Lansing

University Musical Society
No Safety Net Theater Series 2017
Ann Arbor

MotorCity Casino Hotel
Campbell Ewald, Advertising Agency
Detroit

AT&T Michigan

Diamond Castle Jewelers
Novi

American Mattress
Novi

Broadway In Detroit
The Fisher Theatre
SMZ Advertising, Agency
Detroit

Photo on far left: Patrice Wade-Olsen is a nurse practitioner for Corktown Health Center. The center is designed to provide LGBTQ-specific healthcare for its patients. She is joined by Corktown CEO Theresa Roscoe and volunteer MeYonna.

Center photo: Katie Marquette (left) is joined by her wife, Ellie. The couple spent pride together and took time to honor the victims of the Orlando shootings two years ago.

Photo on far right: Stephanie Slate (left) and girlfriend Amber Rampson attended Motor City Pride for the first time this year. They said they are planning to make it a new tradition.

BTL Photos: Eve Kucharski

► Motor City Pride

Continued from p. 6

knew anyone who was at Pulse, or were there or were affected by it directly, it still hurts. It's been two years now, and it was really cathartic. So now, I think it's really important to not forget."

Marquette's wife, Ellie, added that "it's a family thing, too."

"A lot of people don't have families that are supportive," she said. "So the gay community might be your family. Yeah, we didn't know somebody, but it's like your family."

And it's likely that many other people at the festival felt the same way, like Stephanie Slate and Amber Rampson, a young couple that saw Motor City Pride as the start of a new tradition in their life together.

"She's what brought me here. I couldn't be happier to have her in my life and to celebrate our love here. It's just the best feeling in the world," Slate said.

"I've always wanted to come here but I never had the confidence to come here by myself," Rampson added. "But, since I met her last year, this is about to be our ongoing thing every year. It's something just to show that everybody's the same and we love expressing it."

Sunday's events then kicked off with a bang, when at 12:30 the annual pride parade shattered 2017's record for participating vendors by almost double, and drew a crowd 25,000 strong. Overall attendance numbered almost double as much. The parade was hosted by Fiat, and peppered with a variety of other known corporate sponsors like Chase Bank, Delta Air Lines and Ally Financial.

The remainder of the day was focused on performers, with groups like Killer Flamingos, The Band Mint and Marquis.

For Sean Reedy, who both attended pride and marched in the parade, he summed up the importance of this year's pride turnout – even in rainy weather – succinctly: "I came here because I'm proud of who I am."

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‘Small but Mighty’ Couple Wins Allies of the Year

Larry and Sandy Feldman Exhibit Courage and Love Fighting Hate

Photo: Courtesy of Melissa Rodgers

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

As much courage and resolve as it takes to form a picket line, facing those picketers can be just as daunting. Especially so, if the person confronting them is a teenager. Sandy and Larry Feldman certainly thought so, and even though they are straight, they decided to stand with Benton Harbor’s OutCenter – an LGBTQ-oriented community center – as allies when they were the target of a bigoted protestor’s campaign.

“There’s an African-American man from Benton Harbor who has decided that the OutCenter is a threat to black youth. That the OutCenter is trying to convert young black men in Benton Harbor to homosexuality,” Larry Feldman said. “So, Mary Jo Schnell, who is the director, reached out to everyone (who is) supportive of the OutCenter and asked if we could come be a part of a gathering there. Not to convert this man, but to gather in the back of the building and for some of us to be in the front of the building to escort, especially the kids, the teenagers, who we thought might be a little wary of those who were picketing in front.”

And although the anti-gay conversion picketers didn’t end up rallying more than two people in the front of the center, the Feldmans were among the first to sign up to defend what they believe in – many protestors or not.

“Mary Jo was saying, ‘You and Larry were among the first people to be escorts, we didn’t know how many protestors would be there and you said you would walk side by side with some of our teens who feel scared,’” Sandy Feldman said. “I said to her, ‘You were surprised because you didn’t think a couple of little old Jewish people would be a formidable force to accompany people (laughs)?’”

“We’re small but mighty,” Larry Feldman laughed.

That resolve is just one of many reasons why the Feldman’s are receiving OutCenter’s 2018 Allies of the Year award. On Saturday, June 16, the couple will be honored at Lake Effect Pride. Sandy Feldman said that both she and her husband are thrilled to get the news.

“Larry and I were really touched to receive the email from Mary Jo,” she said. “And especially because there are so many good foot soldiers that are connected to the OutCenter that do so much to try to make their outreach successful and have the center be a resource for vulnerable people for Southwest Michigan. It’s really not an award for us, but it represents all the people who work together, gay and straight, for the LGBT people in this area.”

Being a Resource

And the small and mighty couple has spent their entire life in some way involved in social justice work. Originally based out of Chicago, the Feldmans first became involved in fighting social disparities when they began working as psychotherapists – Larry Feldman as a psychiatrist and Sandy Feldman as a clinical social worker.

“We were really aware of a lot of discrimination that people in the community were dealing with and we began seeing a number of people in psychotherapy who detailed their experiences,” Sandy Feldman said. “(That) really brought the struggle to light for us and we’re touched to be listed (today) in some centers as safe people to come to for therapy.”

> *“It became really clear that what we were dealing with was just a small percentage that the vast majority of LGBT people have had to endure and struggle with their whole life.”*
>
> – Sandy Feldman

And though they began to gain an understanding of the effects of racial bias on their clients, it was a familial connection that tied the Feldmans to the LGBTQ community.

“The underlying commitment came from loving my little sister who came out in mid-life as a lesbian and fell in love with my sister-in-law,” Sandy Feldman said. “We are very connected with them and their joys and their struggles. We’ve traveled with them and we’ve seen moments of discrimination and judgment, and it’s really strengthened our resolve to try to be a resource, not just for our family and friends, but to be a resource in the greater community.”

The couple eventually moved to Oak Park, Illinois, where they started to put that drive for social justice and equality to work. It was in that village that they were honored as Allies of the Year for the first time, when they helped pass an ordinance in favor of spousal benefits for LGBTQ partnerships.

“It feels strange looking back on this,” Larry Feldman said. “That was over 20 years ago.”

And though the couple moved 30 minutes south of Benton Harbor in an effort to gain some peace and quiet soon after they received their Illinois ally award, they never could keep themselves from getting involved in a cause they were passionate about.

“When we both moved here, we both had some books in progress that we were working on. Larry’s was actually a book highlighting discrimination and challenging some of the attacks on LGBT folks. We had this idea, we had this little house in the woods and we would complete our writing and consolidate some of the lessons we’ve learned,” Sandy Feldman said. “We saw a newspaper article saying that there was a meeting at Lake Michigan college area to see how they could address the racial divide. Larry saw that notice and said, ‘Well we could take some time out to go to one meeting and share what we learned in project unity in Oak Park.’ By the end of that meeting we had signed on for three committees and we have been really active for the 19 years since then.”

Repercussions

Still, their public involvement with movements for social change hasn’t been without repercussions. The Feldmans said that they’ve often been the target of disgruntled peoples’ attacks. For instance, they both often write letters to the editors of a variety of publications in hopes of bringing progressive perspectives to the fore and have received their share of blowback.

“We’ve gotten threatening letters, threatening emails, threatening phone calls, a virulent tape of a hostile anti-LGBT sermon that had been delivered by an anti-LGBT pastor that had been taped to our front door,” Sandy Feldman said.

However, she said that whenever she and her husband felt scared because of the work that they were doing, she worked to remind herself and her husband of the importance of their work.

“It became really clear that what we were dealing with was just a small percentage that the vast majority of LGBT people have had to endure and struggle with their whole life,” she said. “And we should certainly have enough courage to stay in the fray. We both enjoy white privilege and straight privilege that some of the people who we love and people who we work with do not have.”

That knowledge is what has helped the couple stand together – whether it comes to personal attacks or in the case of attacks against organizations like OutCenter. When asked how to deal with the often negative aspects of campaigning for LGBTQ and racial rights, the Feldmans said the answer was simple.

“We certainly sometimes feel disheartened, but the best antidote to that is to get back to work and ask, ‘What can we do to counter the hate’ and, ‘What can we do to bring more positive energy to the community?’” he said.

And lastly, Sandy Feldman emphasized that “action is the antidote to powerlessness.”

To get involved in the OutCenter or find out more about Larry and Sandy Feldman’s work as facilitators for Whole Lives, Health Lives, go online to outcenter.org.

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► **Supreme Court Ruling**
Continued from p. 14

community by opponents of LGBT rights through legislation and legal challenges. But the Court did not change the status quo of legal jurisprudence. The Supreme Court protected the core principle that states can enforce their civil rights laws protecting LGBTQ people, so long as these laws applied neutrally and fairly across the board.

So what can we do as a community in response to the decision? It's important to realize that many parts of the country, including Michigan, do not explicitly protect LGBTQ people from discrimination in stores and restaurants, let alone housing and the workplace.

In fact, 60 percent of our states lack these protections. Businesses, religious leaders, civil rights advocates, health organizations, labor groups, LGBTQ people and our friends, families and allies are joining together to try to amend the Michigan Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act of 1976. Specifically, to include sexual orientation and gender identity, and are calling on the U.S. Congress to pass the Equality Act (the first federal LGBTQ civil rights law) and create one set of rules for everyone. It's time for our nation's laws to catch up to our nation's values and protect all of us from discrimination, so that no one can be fired from their job, denied a place to live or turned away from a business simply because of who they are.

Last week's court decision was not a license to discriminate, but an affirmation of the enforcement of civil rights laws to address discrimination against marginalized communities, including LGBTQ people. But the fight is not over and we must remain vigilant to ensure that religious beliefs, which are and should be strongly protected under the First Amendment, are not used as a sword to harm others, like Charlie and Dan.

Jay Kaplan is a staff attorney with the ACLU of Michigan since 2001. He can be reached at jkaplan@aclumich.org

► **Parting Glances**
Continued from p. 14

Hitler personally had his gay SA chief of staff and longtime friend, Ernst Rohm, murdered.

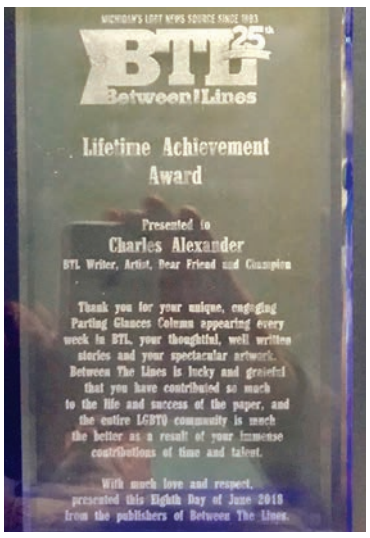
One hundred and fifty gay arrests were made following Rohm's murder. Roughly 15,000 gay men were soon sent to concentration camps. They wore a pink triangle armband and were subjected to horrific brutality.

As for Hitler, he may, say historians, have had an undescended testicle – or, recently news reported, a micropenis – but he didn't switch hit. After 15 years he finally married his airhead, longtime mistress, blonde Eva Braun.

Two days later they committed suicide. Alas: 12 years, 50 million lives, 6 million Jews, 25,000 homosexuals too late. Heil Trump! Heil Santorum! Heil Ryan! Heil the estimated 81 percent of evangelical voters who voted for them (and, the 23 percent of LGBT dimwits who should have known better).

Charles Alexander is prolific both as a BTL columnist (700-plus columns) and as a well-known LGBT community artist (1000 Face Book images). He is a Spirit of Detroit Award recipient and an Affirmations LGBT CENTER Jan Stevenson awardee. Connect with him at Charles@pridesource.com.

Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to Charles Alexander June 8 at BTL's 25th anniversary celebration.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With much love and respect, presented this Eighth Day of June 2018 from the publishers of Between The Lines

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Creep of the Week

Jeff Amyx

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

There are many things that bother me about this sign, but one thing that is simply not being commented upon enough is its ugliness. I mean, yes, it's figuratively ugly. But I'm talking literal here.

By the time you read this we might be at war with Canada or Trump may have invited Kim Jong Un for a sleepover in the Lincoln bedroom. Anything could happen! We're literally living in the most dangerous reality show ever televised. And the most hateful people are feeling more emboldened than ever.

Which brings me to Jeff Amyx, owner and proprietor of Amyx Hardware and Roofing Supplies in Washburn, Tennessee, and his crudely scrawled "No gays allowed" sign in his store window. He originally hung the sign up after the Supreme Court ruled that same-sex couples could get legally married. Though some news reports have claimed that Amyx put the sign "back up" following the Court's "gay cake" ruling, it's actually never clear that he ever took the original sign down. It's possible that he just doubled down on his message by adding more signage.

There are many things that bother me about this sign, but one thing that is simply not being commented upon enough is its ugliness. I mean, yes, it's figuratively ugly. But I'm talking literal here.

Keep in mind, I have never been to this store. For one thing, it is in Tennessee and I am not. For another, well, the owner is clearly a hateful person. But I have the magic of the interwebs.

So from what I've seen in photos, the anti-gay sign is taped on the glass on the store's front door surrounded by other signs, some of which are professionally done (like the grammatically-troubled "SMILE your on Camera" sign). The sign is a plain white sheet of office size paper with "No gays allowed" hand written in black marker. The letters are unevenly spaced and the width of the marker strokes lack uniformity. So definitely no points for presentation.

Compare this to the banner hanging below his store's road side sign that reads, "God destroyed all the SODOMITES for an EXAMPLE. 2nd Peter 2:6." This banner was clearly done by some kind of professional sign-making entity, though the color scheme, red writing on white background, leaves a lot to be desired. It's of the same colors and font used in the Amyx store sign right above it. While I can appreciate the stylistic continuity, the anti-gay message could really use a splash of color to make it pop.

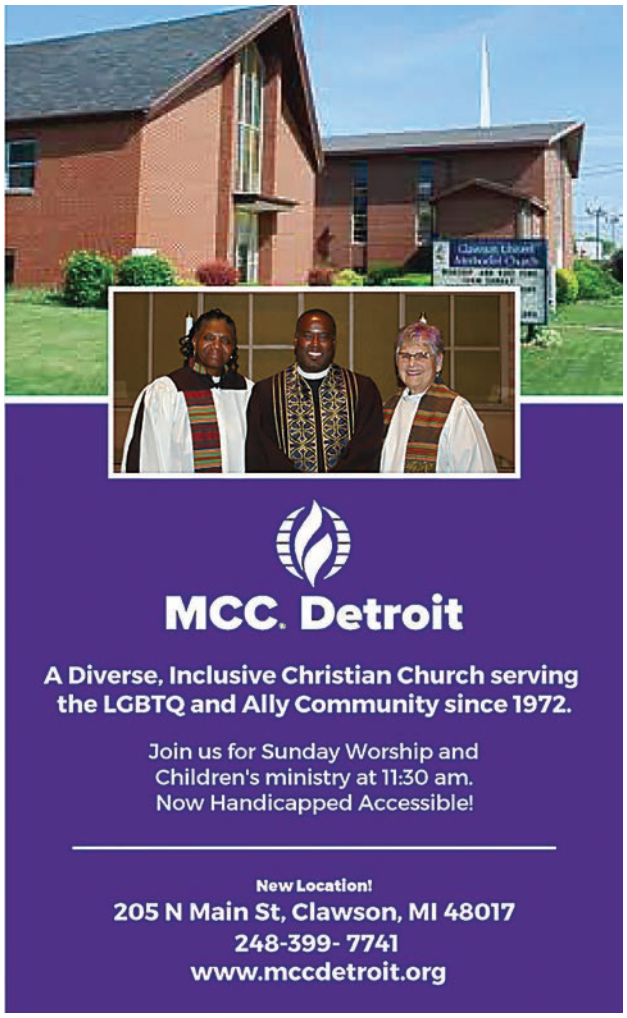
And speaking of color, there's a smaller red and white sign hung from the bottom of the Sodomites banner that reads, "Now mixing paint." It is very confusing. I mean, if the only sign above it was the one reading "Amyx Hardware and Roofing Supplies" then the meaning of the paint sign would be clear: this is a hardware store and we mix paint. But the paint sign being separated from the store sign by the sodomites banner, to which it is also attached, muddies the context. So I find myself wondering, "What are the gays doing with paint? Does this have something to do with the rainbow? There a prohibition about mixing in Leviticus, but isn't it about mixing fabrics?" In other words, there is a real lack of message continuity.

But the effort is there. Clearly, the sodomites banner took some planning and money, while the "No gays allowed" sign is a slapdash embarrassment.

Also worth noting that according to Sarah Huckabee Sanders, Trump is just fine with shop owners putting up signs refusing gays. This is, of course, not the first time Trump has given his nod of approval to something totally lacking in quality or grace.

But to be fair to Amyx, the nearest Hobby Lobby to his store looks to be about 30 miles away according to Google Maps. That said, it's a hardware store! It sells paint (mixed, even!), brushes, rulers, duct tape (which comes in all sorts of colors and patterns these days), adhesives, lighting, fasteners of all kind. Anything you could conceivably need to make an impressive sign was available to him at cost. In other words, Amyx had everything he needed to #BeBest, but he didn't.

And Jesus wept.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NEWS

Sen. Kamala Harris Calls Out Judicial Nominees for Anit-LGBT Bias

BY KAREN OCAMB

Sen. Kamala Harris (Photo courtesy Harris' office)

Last November, a year and change after Donald Trump's surprise election, respected New York Times reporter Linda Greenhouse wrote a column about the "conservative plan to weaponize the federal courts."

While progressives generally expected Trump to payback his conservative supporters with at least one Supreme Court justice, a 37-page plan written by Northwestern University law professor Steven G. Calabresi, founder and board chair of the conservative Federalist Society, declared their intention: "undoing the judicial legacy of President Barack Obama."

"There is something bracing about the naked activism of a leader of a movement that has spent the past generation railing against judicial activism," Greenhouse wrote of Calabresi's plan to pack the courts. "There has never been anything like the weaponizing of the federal judiciary that is currently taking place. Seventeen of President Trump's 18 nominees to the federal appeals courts are connected to the Federalist Society. Donald McGahn, the White House counsel, joked at the Federalist Society's annual convention in Washington last week that it was 'completely false' that the Trump administration was outsourcing to the group the task of finding judicial nominees. 'I've been a member of the Federalist Society since law school,' Mr. McGahn said. 'Still am, so frankly it seems like it's been in-sourced.'"

That was in Nov. 2017. Last Tuesday, as eight states faced key primary votes, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell announced he was keeping the Senate in session through much of August to deal with legislation – and a backlog of judicial nominations. In other words, while America is distracted with whatever Trump tweets next and politicos worry about the midterms, McConnell is going to implement Calabresi's plan, undo Obama's legal legacy – and put lower court judges in place who comport to the right wing conservative ideology.

And while few are paying attention – California Sen. Kamala Harris is. On Thursday, June 7, at a Senate Judiciary Committee business executive meeting, Harris spoke up about how Trump's judicial nominees have records of bias toward the LGBT community.

"This is LGBTQ Pride Month – the month where we recognize and lift up many contributions of LGBTQ Americans," Harris said. "It also serves as a reminder that we must continue to fight for the rights of LGBTQ individuals, who have been marginalized and have faced discrimination for far too long simply because of who they are and who they love. But despite the tremendous progress this country has made in recognizing equal rights for all Americans – including LGBTQ Americans – this Committee has approved many nominees who have fought against that progress at every step.

"For instance, we have had a nominee who argued that a judge's impartiality should be questioned because the judge is in a committed, same-sex relationship," Harris continued. "We have had another nominee who has repeatedly asserted that full marriage equality 'imperils civic peace'…These are just a few of the nominees who have openly expressed hostility to the LGBTQ community and who have fought against full equality for LGBTQ Americans. And these are the same nominees who will likely preside over cases involving the rights of those Americans."

Harris previously spoke out against Howard Nielson, Jr.'s nomination to be District Judge for the District of Utah, for his role in representing proponents of Prop 8, a ballot measure that stripped away marriage equality in California – a fight with which Harris was intimately familiar as State Attorney General.

Harris' comments should serve as a wakeup call to LGBT organizations and activists who believe the courts will be defenders of LGBT civil rights as the Trump administration continues to roll back LGBT progress.

Full transcript of Harris' statement:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and I'd like to associate myself with my colleague's remarks. It is truly deeply troubling that we're moving forward with a nominee who has neither his home state senators' blue slips and neither of them, and who has misled the commission that was vetting him.

In addition, I think it's important to recognize that this is LGBTQ Pride Month – the month where we recognize and lift up many contributions of LGBTQ Americans.

It also serves, this month, as a reminder that we must continue to fight for the rights of LGBTQ individuals who have been marginalized and have faced discrimination for far too long simply because of who they are and who they love.

But despite the tremendous progress this country has made in recognizing equal rights for all Americans – including LGBTQ Americans – this Committee has approved many nominees who have fought against that progress at every step.

Everyone who comes before this Committee says that they will set aside

their personal views and provide a fair hearing to those who stand before them.

But some of these nominees have extreme views and it is difficult to see how any LGBTQ American could reasonably believe that these nominees would give them a fair hearing.

For instance, we have had a nominee who argued that a judge's impartiality should be questioned because the judge is in a committed, same-sex relationship.

We have had another nominee who has repeatedly asserted that full marriage equality "imperils civic peace." That nominee is now a confirmed judge with a lifetime appointment.

We have had yet another nominee who expressed support for the county clerk in Kentucky who defied a federal court order by refusing to issue marriage licenses to gay couples after the Obergefell decision.

These are just a few of the nominees who have openly expressed hostility to the LGBTQ community and who have fought against full equality for LGBTQ Americans. And these are the same nominees who will likely preside over cases involving the rights of those Americans.

And it is a sad truth that showing hostility toward the LGBTQ community is not something that has disqualified individuals from becoming a nominee of this administration.

As this Committee knows, these lifetime appointees will make important decisions about the lives and opportunities of all Americans, including LGBTQ Americans for generations to come.

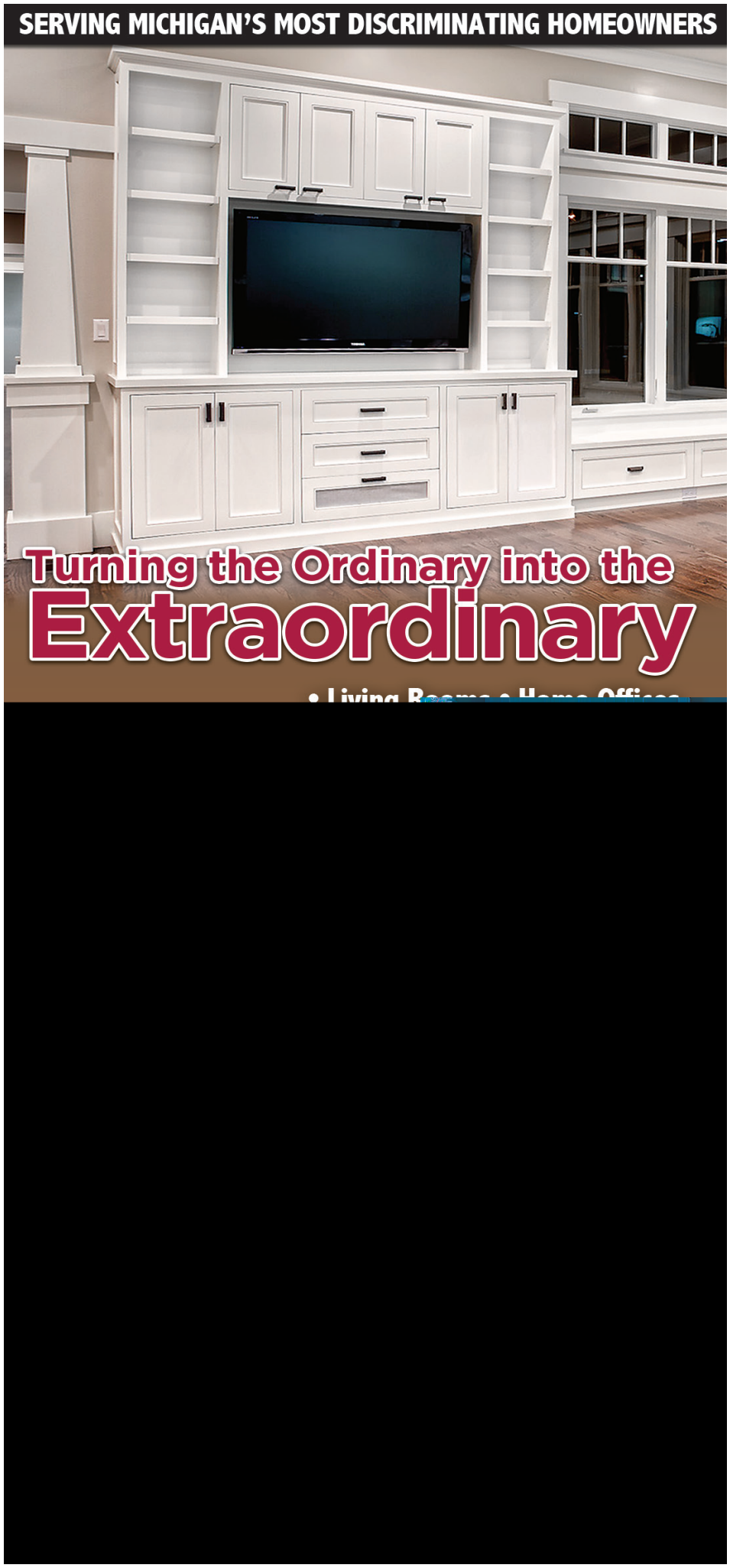
As evidenced by the Masterpiece Cakeshop case that was decided just this week.

And as this Committee knows in that case the Court ruled against the Colorado Civil Rights Commission because the Commission did not act as a neutral decision-maker for the plaintiff. At the same time, the decision reaffirmed that LGBTQ Americans are equal and should not be subject "to indignities when they seek goods and services in an open market."

What is clear from that decision is that the LGBTQ community will have to continue to fight for equality. And that is a fight that we – as Americans who care about civil rights and equal dignity – must all join.

And that includes ensuring that our federal judiciary is not stacked with individuals who have shown hostility to any group of Americans, especially those who have dedicated their careers to undermining the equality of LGBTQ Americans.

This flood of extreme nominees is being rushed through and does not reflect the best principles of our system of justice. And this has to stop. I believe we can do better. Thank you.



UK Ambassador Urges Countries to Decriminalize Homosexuality

BY MICHAEL K. LAVERS

British Ambassador to the U.S. Kim Darroch on Friday urged Commonwealth countries that have yet to decriminalize consensual same-sex sexual relations to do so.

"We just urge all of our friends and partners in other countries around the world to move on as we have done to make their societies more open, more liberal, to embrace anti-discrimination in relation to the LGBT community as we have," Darroch told the Washington Blade during an interview at the British Embassy in D.C. "It just makes your society a better place."

"These are individuals after all who contribute massively wherever they are," he added.

The Blade spoke with Darroch before the embassy's annual Pride reception, which took place less than two months after Prime Minister Theresa May said she "deeply" regrets colonial-era laws criminalizing consensual same-sex relations the U.K. introduced in Commonwealth countries.

"Discriminatory laws made many years ago continue to affect the lives of many people, criminalizing same-sex relations and failing to protect women and girls," said May in a speech she gave at the Commonwealth summit in London on April 17. "I am all too aware that these laws were often put in place by my own country. They were wrong then, and they are wrong now. As the U.K.'s prime minister, I deeply regret both the fact that such laws were introduced and the legacy of discrimination, violence and even death that persists today."

A judge on Trinidad and Tobago's High Court on April 22 struck down the country's sodomy law.

Three LGBT people in Barbados on June 6 filed a lawsuit with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights that challenges their country's sodomy law. Activists in India, Kenya and other Commonwealth countries continue to challenge colonial-era statutes that criminalize consensual same-sex sexual acts.

"She was absolutely right to do it," Darroch told the Blade, referring to May's speech. "It was a courageous statement, but it was very clear and very firm and I agree with it completely."

British Ambassador to the U.S. Kim Darroch speaks at a Pride reception at the British Embassy in D.C. on June 8, 2018. He told the Washington Blade before the event that Commonwealth countries that have yet to decriminalize consensual same-sex sexual relations should do so. (Photo courtesy of Scott Marder)

Darroch Touts LGBTI Rights Progress in U.K.

Laws that pardoned gay and bisexual men who were convicted under homophobic statutes in England, Wales and Northern Ireland took effect in 2017. The Scottish Parliament on June 6 unanimously approved these pardons for gay and bisexual men in Scotland who were prosecuted under anti-gay laws.

Queen Elizabeth II in 2013 posthumously pardoned Alan Turing, a pioneering mathematician who was convicted of gross indecency in 1952 for having a relationship with another man.

Darroch told the Blade the U.K. now has "some of the strongest anti-discrimination laws on the planet."

There are currently 45 openly lesbian, gay and bisexual MPs in the U.K. Darroch also pointed out same-sex couples have been able to legally marry in England, Scotland and Wales since 2014.

"In that context, I think it's exactly right for the prime minister to have said what she said," he said, referring to May's speech. "I'm proud to represent a government that does that kind of thing."

Darroch acknowledged "nowhere is perfect" when the Blade asked him about what more the British government can do to combat discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

He said support for Pride marches in the U.K. is "pretty extraordinary" and it is "remarkable having the armed forces in full uniform supporting them." Darroch nevertheless noted consensual same-sex sexual relations remain criminalized in more than 70 countries.

Men convicted of consensual same-sex sexual activity in Iran, Saudi Arabia and a handful of other countries face the death penalty. Darroch told the Blade the British government's participation in Pride events around the world and its Magna Carta Fund for Human Rights and Democracy are among the ways it is urging countries to repeal their sodomy laws.

Darroch on Saturday marched in the Capital Pride parade alongside the British Embassy's float.

"We do quite a lot now internationally to support the cause that is something we strongly believe in," he told the Blade. "We pride ourselves as being an open and liberal society and that's the kinds of things that we do domestically that we should also being doing overseas."

Darroch Welcomes Bermuda Marriage Ruling

Darroch spoke with the Blade two days after Bermuda Supreme Court Chief Justice Ian R. C. Kawaley ruled a law that rescinded marriage rights for same-sex couples in the British island territory is unconstitutional.

Darroch said the ruling is "a good thing."

The Domestic Partnership Act — which Gov. John Rankin signed in February amid strong strong opposition from LGBTI activists in Bermuda and their supporters around the world – took effect on June 1. A spokesperson for the British Foreign Office told the Blade late last year the issue was "a matter for the" territory's government to decide.

Kawaley's ruling will not take effect for six weeks. The Bermuda government has yet to formally appeal it.

This article originally appeared in the Washington Blade and is made available in partnership with the National LGBT Media Association.

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Marriage at Ferndale Pride Boosts Visibility of Asexual Community

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

On a warm, partly cloudy Saturday in Ferndale, thousands of people donned their best rainbow gear and gathered on W 9 Mile road to show their Ferndale pride June 2. But, instead of a casual T-shirt or colorful tube socks, Tia Wheeler and Jenny Larson attended Ferndale Pride with clothes several cuts above the norm; a tuxedo and wedding dress. The couple's marriage at the event's main stage fittingly kickstarted the 2018 festival with a message of love and support delivered by Deacon Angela Lippard, of Christ the Good Shephard Independent Catholic Community, who presided over the couple's wedding.

"I have a final blessing and wish for you both," she said. "May you always be in love and may all that is love always be in you. May you always see and encourage the best in each other, may the challenges that life brings your way make your marriage even stronger. May you always be each other's best friends and greatest love. Your lives are very special, may all things good touch your lives in many ways. May this blessing rest upon you and fill all your coming days."

After the couple's kiss and a cheer from the crowd, Larson took a stand at the microphone, making sure to emphasize another reason that the couple chose to get married at Ferndale Pride.

"Today we are spreading awareness of asexuality," Larson said. "To increase visibility, we will release balloons in the color of the asexual flag."

PFLAG defines asexuality as referring to individuals who do "not experience romantic or sexual attraction," and that they can experience things like "relationships, attraction and arousal somewhat differently" than others. However, asexuality is different than celibacy or abstinence, because those are chosen behaviors.

When asked why the couple chose to highlight the asexual community in particular, Larson said that the balloon launch was a way to highlight a part of the LGBTQ community that doesn't often get the recognition it deserves. It's also where it made sense for the couple to tie the knot.

"Ferndale pride last year is where I started to come out as asexual," Larson said. "But also, I really feel comfortable at Ferndale Pride and this is also where I wanted to be and marry Tia."

Wheeler added that although she herself is not a member of the community, the increased visibility might shed more light on what it means to be asexual and to ward off myths about the asexual community.

Tia Wheeler and Jenny Larson at Ferndale Pride June 2. BTL Photo: Eve Kucharski

"I also think there's a misconception that people believe that asexuals can't be sexual," Wheeler said. "Like in our case, they were surprised that we kissed as long as we did. For me, we've always kissed that long."

Michelle Gaddis, the director of the Ann Arbor Area Asexuals – the asexual meet-up group to which Larson belongs – agreed with Wheeler. This year is the first year there was an asexual booth at Ferndale Pride, and Gaddis said that its addition along with Wheeler and Larson's marriage is a great step to dispelling misconceptions about the asexual community and reaffirming that they have a place in the LGBTQ community.

"Some people think we're broken or frigid or that we haven't met the right person and that's not true. Some people think that aces are (only) straight, white people. We do have heteromantic, but there's also homoreomantic, aromantic and definitely many under orientations under the sun," Gaddis said. "There are gay aces and there are bi aces."

Gaddis said that when she came out six years ago in high school, she constantly had to reexplain what her sexuality meant, and reaffirm that she was in the process of discovering her identity within a real orientation and not a made up phase.

"It did take a couple of years for me to accept that that was who I was and that I should really start dating other asexuals. There are a lot of people who have mixed relationships, but for me personally, it worked for me to date another ace. I've been dating my partner for about five years," Gaddis said. "But some people want to say it doesn't work, and just because for me it didn't work, it doesn't mean that it can't for others."

And Larson and Wheeler's marriage is a testament to that point. Larson said that part of the reason that she fell in love with Wheeler was Wheeler's ability to be learn about asexuality.

"Tia was very considerate, especially at the beginning. She said, 'I don't know anything about asexuality' (laughs). And (although) I usually say queer, if you wanted to define my sexuality I'd say panromantic asexual," Larson said. "I love a person for who they are, not for what's in their pants. That's what I tell people. I love Tia and if she wanted to transition or anything, I'd be totally fine with it. I love Tia."

More information about the Ann Arbor Asexuals group can be found online at facebook.com or meetup.com

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DAN REYNOLDS IS ON A MISSION

PERFORMING

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Photo: Eliot Lee Hazel

Imagine Dragons Frontman Talks Being a Mormon LGBTQ Ally and Expanding His Queer-Outreach Festival

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

During the inaugural LoveLoud Festival in August 2017 on the campus of Utah Valley University in Orem, roughly 40 miles outside Salt Lake City, 17,000 people fell into the embrace of Dan Reynolds. Amid performances of his band's towering anthems, like "Radioactive," Reynolds' message rang loud and clear: love yourself, and love the young queer people who need it most, unconditionally. Hugs for LGBTQ youth from the Imagine Dragons frontman, recipient of The Trevor Project's 2017 Hero Award, don't get much bigger than they did that day. Except they will, soon.

Reynolds, 30, takes his ally platform seriously, so this year's second annual LoveLoud Festival, on July 28, will be held at Rice Eccles Stadium in Salt Lake City. Capacity: 46,000.

Comedian, actor and writer Cameron Esposito, an out lesbian, will perform and emcee, with performances from Imagine Dragons, Zedd, Linkin Park's Mike Shinoda, Grace VanderWaal, Neon Trees' Tyler Glenn, and Vagabon and A.Q.

Proceeds will benefit local and national LGBTQ charities, including Encircle, Trevor Project, Tegan and Sara Foundation, and more. Reynold's foundation serving the LGBTQ community, also named LoveLoud, was launched in 2017 to "bring communities and families together to help ignite the vital conversation about what it means to unconditionally love our LGBTQ youth."

In mid April, Reynolds called from Zurich while touring to reflect on reconciling his LGBTQ support with Mormonism and reconnecting with young gay friends he couldn't wholeheartedly support because of his past religious beliefs. He also talked about his doc "Believer," which chronicles his journey from deep Mormon faith to passionate LGBTQ activist, and the undercurrent of queerness running through Imagine Dragons' latest album, "Evolve."

LoveLoud started with a phone call between you and Tyler Glenn, right?

Yeah. We knew each other from a distance before, because we both served the same Mormon mission, in Omaha, Nebraska. When we got home, even before I started Imagine Dragons, I went to a Neon Trees show and they were playing little clubs in Utah. We both came up at the same time, and there's not a whole lot of Mormons in the music industry, so you just kind of know each other through that. But eventually, I called him, and when he put out his solo record (in 2016), "Excommunication," I connected with him in a lot of ways.

How open to the queer community were you when you first met him?

We were both trying desperately to be textbook Mormons, but I think both of us were finding we weren't fitting into that box for different reasons. I got kicked out of BYU, and that really shook me up and threw me down a road of feeling needless shame and guilt. For Tyler, it was a whole other level for him of having to live a compartmentalized life and trying to find happiness within the guidelines of an incorrect teaching. It was just debilitating for him. There was always such a heaviness around him.

I remember when we played a show, he was on stage wearing a sequined shirt and a very kind of glamorous outfit, and somebody in the crowd heckled him. This was before he came out, and I remember him saying something from the stage to the extent of, "You don't know me and I'm struggling with things right now and fuck you," and he flicked off the crowd.

Watching him, what was going through your mind?

I felt what I've always felt since probably seventh grade when one of my best friends was gay and Mormon and I watched him never want to talk about it because it was so heavy. There were no answers to be had at that young of an age when you're raised in a really religious family. It's hard to find

any resolution other than leave your home or get kicked out of the house, so I had seen that from a young age in middle school and felt super conflicted as a religious person thinking, I'm supposed to believe all these things, but with it comes this teaching that doesn't sit right in my heart at all. Even as a 13-year-old, I saw my friends be conflicted with their sexuality and religion and I was thinking, "OK, something's wrong here."

At the time, were you the support system for them you wanted to be?

We just didn't really talk about it. They were my friends, so I didn't stop being their friend, but I think we just didn't talk about it because neither of us had an answer. It was this heavy thing that was lingering over their heads, and I didn't have any answers as a 14-year-old kid who was going to church every Sunday and being told what to say.

I look back: I'm a strong believer in the whole "You should live life with no regrets." But you know, I can't tell you, honestly, that I don't have regrets in this specific way. I wish as a 14-year-old boy I could've had the words to say, "Hey, this is not great, and if there is a God and it's this loving God that we're taught about, how could we rationally believe that that God would make you have this sense of love that you don't get to act upon?" Which is supposedly the most beautiful part of existence and human nature – to love. How could any of that make sense? I wish that I had the mental and spiritual capabilities to see that as a kid, but I didn't.

I was just dealing with my own guilt complex and feeling bad about being a 14-year-old boy dealing with my own sexuality. Even as a heterosexual and a 14-year-old kid in the Mormon church, you're immediately feeling guilt and shame about masturbation and sex before marriage. Certainly, on my mission I would've hoped to be a 19-year-old kid who had, again, the mental capabilities or life experience to get out of an incorrect teaching, but I didn't. For two years you're given a white handbook that tells you the answer to everything, so when someone asks you a question, you're supposed to be this 19-year-old kid who has the answer.

So yeah, I really do regret that for those two years I turned to a white handbook rather than my heart and my mind, which already knew the answers, ever since I was a little kid.

My little girl, she's raised to believe what she believes in her heart, and so as a little kid who's raised that way, this is such an easy concept for her. She's 5 years old and I can say, "What does it mean to be gay?" and "How does that feel?" and to her I didn't even have to teach her that concept. It's like, of course people should love who they want and you should never bully, and she understands all those concepts that a child would naturally know. But when you have religion on top of that, it gets muddled.

After becoming this mega-ally rock star, have you been in touch with these gay childhood friends?

Yes, that's been really one of the most fulfilling, beautiful parts of this process, just connecting with them and them knowing that they have a friend that fully accepts them and loves them and has known them for years through this whole process. Because you have to be Mormon on some level to understand how heavy Mormonism is.

But yes, we've connected, with two in particular, and we've talked about how they've both left the church because there's really no safe space for LGBTQ youth within the Mormon church right now. There's just not. There's no healthy option for any LGBTQ youth (in the church), and that's the sad thing. I wish I could be giving some options to any Orthodox religious LGBTQ kids.

And you are, with LoveLoud. How would you describe the feeling of being at last year's premiere LoveLoud Festival?

I would say, to date, LoveLoud last year was genuinely my favorite day of my life thus far. So many people would look in on this and say, "Dan, you should be preaching with your platform: 'Hey, LGBTQ kids who are raised in Orthodox faith, leave. Get out of the religion.'" And that is actually a very uninformed and uneducated and unsafe thing to be saying to these kids because a lot of them don't have a choice. Basically, you're saying, "Get kicked out of your house, potentially, and put yourself in a more at-risk situation." So the only thing that you can do is say, "I love you. I support you 100 percent. And look at all these people who are also religious who also accept and love you." Let us do everything we can do to make a safe space for you, and that's what LoveLoud is about.

It was really rad to see a lot of people who came from very conservative backgrounds of faith, mainly Mormonism, come out, because it was in the heartland of Utah. Some of them came to the festival already having their minds made up of what it meant to fully love and accept LGBTQ youth, but I think a lot of them didn't, which is really rad. There were a lot of people who were on the fence. Uncles and aunts and parents who didn't know how to deal with the situation of having their child be gay, or their niece or nephew. I know their eyes were opened because I got tons of emails and messages from people saying, "My uncle who had never accepted me at all came to this and walked away and gave me a big hug and said, 'I understand and I love you and I accept you.'"

How does it feel to hear a story like that?

It makes it all worth it, because this is a really difficult line to walk. You're never gonna be progressive enough for the progressives, and you're never gonna be conservative enough for the conservatives. I've literally had people tell me, "You've made so many more kids gay, and this is your judgment day to deal with that." I read those things, and of

See Dan Reynolds, page 29

LAHR Board Member to Receive Lansing Inclusion Award

Erica Spitzfaden Among Eight to Be Honored as Friends and Allies of the LGBT Community

BY JASON A. MICHAEL

The third annual City Pulse LGBT Inclusion Awards will take place Thursday, June 14, at Spiral nightclub in Lansing. As in previous years, eight individuals or organizations will be honored for their achievements as LGBT individuals or on behalf of the LGBT community. Lansing City Councilwoman Kathie Dunbar will emcee. Presenters include congressional candidate Elissa Slotkin and state Sen. Curtis Hertel.

This year's honorees include Dr. Kaston Anderson-Carpenter of Michigan State University for his groundbreaking research on marginalized populations; Nicole Ellefson for her advocacy for transgender rights; Evan Lewis for openly transitioning while on the faculty of a high school; Nick Page/Lauren Ordair for his success as a drag queen in New York; Theresa Rosado for opening an art gallery that features LGBT exhibits; Erica Spitzfaden for her transgender activism and work on the board of the Lansing Association for Human Rights; Maxine Thorne for her accomplishments as a social worker; and Williamston County Schools for adopting a progressive policy on transgender students. Honorees are chosen by a committee that includes past honorees, leaders of local LGBT organizations and from City Pulse.

For her part, Spitzfaden said she's not accustomed to being recognized for her activism as it's a natural extension of who she is.

"It's actually kind of a new thing to me so I was trying to figure out how to feel about it," she said. "It's certainly nice to be recognized by the community for some of the work that I've been doing."

That work, largely done via the Lansing Association for Human Rights, includes advocating for the LGBT community, conducting diversity trainings for the State of Michigan, meeting with the Ingham County Sheriff's Office, speaking at Michigan

State University, at meetings of the Michigan Board of Education and Williamston Board of Education, and basically, just tirelessly working for her beloved LGBT community whenever possible.

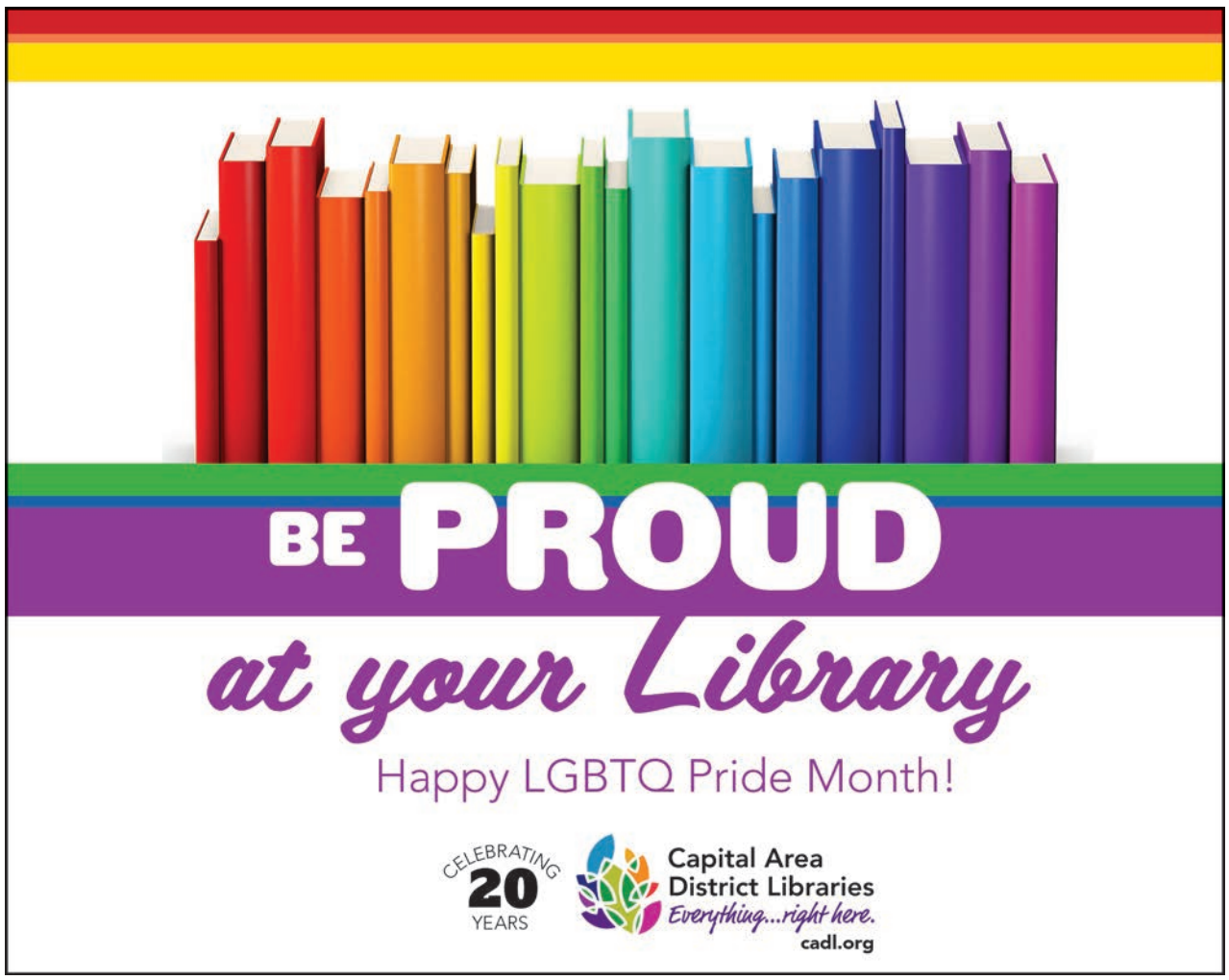
caption: Erica Spitzfaden (Photo courtesy of Roxanne Frifth)

"You don't notice it as much until you become part of it, just how big the community LGBT community is," Spitzfaden said. "There are just a lot of folks out there that you might not meet otherwise. So it's a really good group."

Emily Dievendorf, LAHR's president, said Spitzfaden's award is well deserved.

"I nominated Erica for an Inclusion Award because her work in the mid-Michigan community since joining LAHR has been bold and courageous at a time in history when it is anything but safe to be so visible as an out trans person, much less to be an out trans leader who regularly shows up to speak up in parts of Michigan that are openly waging war on the trans community," she said.

Tickets for the Inclusion Awards are $20 in advance and $25 at the door and available online at lansingcitypulse.com. Tickets include a wristband for the White Party the next night.



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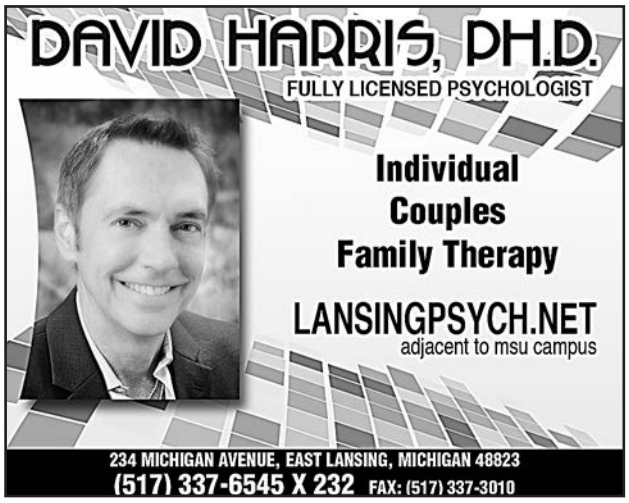

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Michigan and Grand Rapids Pride Takes Middle and West Side of Michigan

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

For those in the center and west sides of the state who missed the pride gatherings in Metro Detroit, they're in luck. This weekend, both Lansing and Grand Rapids will be hosting their own versions of pride. Here is BTL's breakdown of events for the two event for those who are interested in going.

Michigan Pride

Held in the heart of Lansing's Old Town district, Michigan Pride officially starts on Saturday, June 16 at noon, but it will have its kick-off white party on Friday, June 15 from 7 to 10 p.m. Held by Spiral-DanceBar all white attire is encouraged and guests will be charged a $10 cover to attend. the party will feature drag performances, go-go dancers, a photo booth and more. The next day, alongside its regular pride festivities, Lansing residents are encouraged to register to vote.

"Michigan has some major elections coming up. The first step in making sure your voice is heard is registering to vote! Come find the Clerk's tent at Pride on June 16 and we can get you registered," said event organizers. "If you have any questions, or would like us to do voter registration at your event please contact our office at 517-483-4131."

The remainder of pride will last until 7 p.m. on Saturday, and guests are charged $10 for an all-day wristband pass. The pet-friendly event will be held on Old Town's main drag of Turner Street, stretching from Dodge River Drive to Cesar Chavez Ave.

More information can be found on the events Facebook page.

Grand Rapids Pride

In celebration of the event's 30th anniversary, Grand Rapids Pride is pulling out all the stops for its June 16 event. From Noon to 10 p.m., festival-goers will gather at Calder Plaza, located at 300 Monroe Ave. Northwest in Grand Rapids. There, they can see headliners EnVogue, Betty Who and David Hernandez. Tickets range in cost from $8 – which provides a general admission ticket – to $50 – VIP tickets include admission to all scheduled entertainment at the festival and access to a VIP lounge with access to finger food and a complimentary drink.

"All proceeds support the work of the Grand Rapids Pride Center, an organization that has since 1988 been empowering the LGBTQ community in Grand Rapids through social and support groups, education and advocacy," said event organizers.

More information about ticketing can be found online at eventbrite.com, and about headliners at grpride.org.

MSU College of Music Announces 2018-19 Concert Season

EAST LANSING – To many in the Greater Lansing community, Michigan State University's Fairchild Theatre is an acoustic gem that's discovered and then loved because of its performances. Now, those fans can rejoice that the newest event lineups have been announced with the release of the upcoming 2018-19 season.

It will run from September through April, featuring a wide variety of classical and jazz performances. Handel, Mozart, Bernstein and a Strauss opera are all to be expected, and the college is gearing up to kick-off the musical season with "Fairchild Fanfare" on Saturday, Sept. 15, at 3 p.m.

Event organizers said that a "highlight of this series will be Chicago-based super-group Eighth Blackbird," scheduled to perform on Wednesday, April 10 at 7:30 p.m. Their music has been "defined as adventurous, vibrant and known for performing from memory, employing choreography and more." Eighth Blackbird is part of the Entrepreneurial Musical Artist in Residence program sponsored by the MSU Federal Credit Union.

In addition, organizers are excited that two "fan-favorite series will return this season, the Taylor Johnston Early Music Series and the MSU Federal Credit Union Jazz Artist in Residence program."

Both series feature guest artists who include jazz pros Mimi Jones and Melissa Aldana and House of Time, an early music ensemble hailed by San Francisco Classical Voice as "musically suave ... volatile and beguiling."

The concert season will also host a variety of events in spaces throughout campus as well, including the Cobb Great Hall in Wharton Center, Cook Recital Hall and Demonstration Hall.

Reserved-seat events will first be for sale to existing patrons in June, then available to the public in August, including all general admission events. For more information about the new season, visit the website http://music.msu.edu/newseason.

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Happenings

Motor City Sound Board to Host Whoopi Goldberg

Few people have a name as recognizable as Whoopi Goldberg and for good reason: the EGOT winner — a person who has won an Emmy, Grammy, Oscar and Tony Award — has changed the face of pop culture with both her stand-up comedy and iconic films like "Sister Act." Now, she'll be making a return to Detroit's MotorCity Casino Hotel's Sound Board stage. She'll be performing on Friday, June 15, at 8 p.m. Tickets start at $57. More information can be found online at soundboarddetroit.com. This show is 21+.

OUTINGS

Thursday, June 14

Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce Merge & Mixer 6:30 p.m. Michigan Employee Resource Groups for Equality (MERGE) Monthly Networking Event. All are welcomed to network. Host by: Detroit Regional LGBT Chamber of Commerce. Check website for monthly location, RSVP is Required. Soho, 205 W. 9 Mile Road,Ferndale. 248-542-7646 info@detroitlgbtchamber.com info@detroitlgbtchamber.com www.ferndalesoho.com www.detroitlgbtchamber.com

Stand with Trans 2018 Support Groups 7 p.m. All youth are welcome to attend this FREE group. This group meets the 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month. FREE and OPEN to the community. Oakland United Methodist Church, 30450 Farmington Road,Farmington. 248-626-3620 www.oaklandumc.org www.standwithtrans.org

Friday, June 15

Michigan Pride 2018 March, Rally and Festival! 6 p.m. A statewide celebration of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer community and allies. The festival kicks off Friday night with the White Party. Saturday, take part in a march to the Capitol, a rally. Olde Town Lansing, Turner Street,Old Town Lansing. www.lansing.org/events https://www.michigan.org/event/michigan-pride-march-rally-festival

Kalamazoo Pride Night 6 p.m. Join us for Pride Night, in partnership with OutFront Kalamazoo, your local LGBTQ center and home of Kalamazoo Pride. We are hosting a Tailgate Party that includes all-inclusive food/drink. Proceeds will benefit OutFront Kalamazoo. The Homer Stryker Field, 251 Mills Street,Kalamazoo. https://pride.outfrontkzoo.org/facebook-event/pride-night-with-post-game-fireworks/

St. Sebastian at The Slipstream Theatre Initiative 7 p.m. We celebrate Pride in a totally new way. From award winning playwright Andrew Kramer comes the Michigan premiere of a play that delves into what Pride can really mean. Slipstream Theatre Initiative, 460 Hilton Road,Ferndale. insidetheslipstream@gmail.com insidetheslipstream@gmail.com www.slipstreamti.com/box-office

Saturday, June 16

Grand Rapids Pride Festival 2018 12 p.m. It's our 30th birthday and we're feeling 30 & Fabulous!! It's our biggest year ever, and we've got entertainment that will both bring us back to our roots and celebrate the LGBTQ community of today. Calder Plaza, 300 Monroe Avenue,N.W. Grand Rapids. https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2018-grand-rapids-pride-festival-tickets-42926850365

2nd Annual Pride Moonlight Boat Cruise 6:30 p.m. Come out for a night of fun and food at a pretty affordable price. Network with Chamber members and Corporate Partners. Connect with the LGBT community on the beautiful Detroit River. Diamond Jack Tours, Stroh's River Place 201 Joseph Campau Ave.,Detroit. 3131-843-9376 info@detroitlgbtchamber.com info@detroitlgbtchamber.com detroitlgbtchamber.com detroit.carpediem.cd/events/6216299-2nd-annual-pride-cruise-at-detroit-regional-lgbt-chamber-of-commerce/

Sing Out Detroit Presents: Encore 7 p.m. Come Out and Support Sing Out Detroit Chorus as we celebrate 10 years of making music together. We will be performing some of our favorite songs and will be joined by chorus alumni. Join us Ferndale High School, 881 Pinecrest Drive,Ferndale. 248-943-2411 https://www.eventbrite.com/e/sing-out-detroit-presents-encore-tickets-44325980200

Sing Out Detroit Presents: Encore 7 p.m. Celebrating 10 years of music in the making! Ferndale High School, 881 Pinecrest Drive,Ferndale. 248-943-2411 singoutdetroit.org/event/sing-out-detroit-presents-encore/

Friday, June 29

Satori Circus presents "Stroke" 8 p.m. SATORI CIRCUS will perform a new original performance art piece titled, 'Stroke' at the Tangent Gallery / Hastings Street Ballroom. Also performing will be the theatrical rock performance group, The Haberdasher from Port Huron, MI. Tangent Gallery, 715 East Milwaukee Avenue,Detroit. 2484451277 https://www.facebook.com/events/252206855341425/

Saturday, June 30

Great Lakes Bay Pride Festival 12 p.m. The Great Lakes Bay Pride Festival aims to build a community that inspires engagement, equality, and respect for all throughout the Great Lakes Bay Region and beyond. Wenonah Park, 800 N Water St,Bay City. www.greatlakesbaypride.org

MUSIC & MORE

BOOM FOR REAL screening + Q & A June 15, 7:30 p.m. BOOM FOR REAL re-creates Jean-Michel Basquiat's pre-fame life, detailing how his environment formed the artist he became. Join for an in-person Q & A with producer Rachel Dengiz and critic and curator Carlo McCormick (who Cinema Detroit, 4126 Third Street,Detroit. 313 info@cinemadetroit.com info@cinemadetroit.com https://www.cinemadetroit.org https://www.cinemadetroit.org/boom-for-real/

Teaspressa Hosts Grand Opening Event June 16, 11 a.m. Teaspressa's new signature café is celebrating its grand opening and will include complimentary tastings of Teaspressa's signature beverages and tea blends, local vendor giveaways and raffle prizes from top brands. RSVP at teaspressaannarbor.evenbrite.com Teaspressa, 414

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Continued from p. 23

course it's sad. But also I know my path. I know my mission, and I know what I'm doing, so it's OK, 'cause I know there's just misunderstanding. But yeah, those letters mean a lot and they fire me up to just say, "OK, let's go next year to a stadium and let's make it bigger."

What are you most looking forward to about this year's festival?

That it's much, much bigger is exciting. It'll be at least double the size of what it was before. We did 20,000 last year and this year we're doing a stadium, so it's like 40,000. The artists are bigger. And just watching how it spread very organically within the religious community, because it sparked so much dialogue within the Mormon church. Mormon after Mormon hit me up and would be like, "I was at church and someone gave a talk about LoveLoud and there was this big argument about whether it's OK to have your child go to it or not," and I'm like, "Awesome."

That dialogue is way more important even in that one day because the dialogue that's taking place at home about LoveLoud is what needs to be happening rather than a stagnance that has been going on for years within the Mormon church of, "Let's keep moving forward and the kids keep taking their lives and the suicide rates keep going up in Utah." LGBTQ youth are eight times more likely to take their lives when they're not accepted in their homes or community, and that statistic alone is just devastating.

Do you write songs with the queer community in mind?

Definitely on "Evolve." At least three of the songs were produced with (gay producer-songwriter) Justin Tranter, who's just one of the biggest activists in the queer community. Just having him in there around me and the spirit that comes with Justin was certainly inspiring to me, and so there's no doubt that as we were writing songs, there was a need to make sure that these lyrics were going to reach the underdog, were going to reach these queer youth. That they would know, "Hey, this is for me."

I think "Evolve" has it speckled all through it, whether it's just the album artwork – the rainbow on the front – or the lyrics. A lot of things are so subconscious in the writing process. But we were talking about politics a lot at the time and how he felt like his future was so unsettled, and it was gonna be less safe for him. And he was scared. So, we had a lot of deep, beautiful conversations that I'm sure impacted "Evolve" in ways that I couldn't even know.

There's a pretty iconic photo of you holding a rainbow flag at Lollapalooza Brazil Festival in March. Tell me about that moment.

Brazil is an interesting place because it has a lot of people who want change. I believe their pride parade is more populated than anywhere in the world, but it's still a very unsafe place for LGBTQ youth. So, I committed this tour to do everything I can to bring as much color and pride to the stage that a straight man possibly can.

Based on some headlines after that gig, the gay community also didn't seem to mind the shirtlessness.

(Laughs) Hey, I love it. For me this whole process has also been *my* process of coming into my own self and embracing sexuality, period. And celebrating life, and celebrating love. So, it's been a real changing couple of years for me, and all I've been trying to do through the process is be true to myself and follow my heart. But that was a really beautiful moment. I'll always remember that show. It was one of my favorite shows we've ever played.

What do your parents, who declined to be in your documentary, "Believer," think of the film?

I sent the movie to all my family because I just wanted to take that step and not have it be an awkward thing in the family. My mom and dad came to the premiere.

That's huge.

It *was* huge. I know that for the most part we all see a little different on this, but with that said, they've all been really loving and supportive of what I'm doing. But, yeah, there have been rough moments, definitely, during the beginning of it, when I was just getting into it. Arguments here and there within the family.

It's tricky because I love my family and I wanna respect their privacy, but I would be lying to you if I didn't say … it's been a little bit of a rub, yeah. Like I said, my mom and dad came to the premiere and that meant a lot. And my uncle, who's my dad's brother, he's gay and Mormon and moved out of the United States years ago because he just felt like there was no place for him. He had to get that far away to be able to feel like he could be himself. I got to talk to him and I haven't seen him since I was 8 years old, and that was the only uncle I didn't ever get to know – my gay uncle – because he felt so unwelcome and like he couldn't live his true life without moving a country away. My dad went recently and visited him, and that was a really beautiful thing.

I don't know. It's baby steps for me. I know that everybody has their own way of coming around to certain things and it takes time, but the question is, how long will it take? And how many lives will be lost or saved along the way?

As editor of Q Syndicate, the international LGBTQ wire service, Chris Azzopardi has interviewed a multitude of superstars, including Meryl Streep, Mariah Carey and Beyoncé. Reach him via his website at www.chris-azzopardi.com and on Twitter (@chrisazzopardi).

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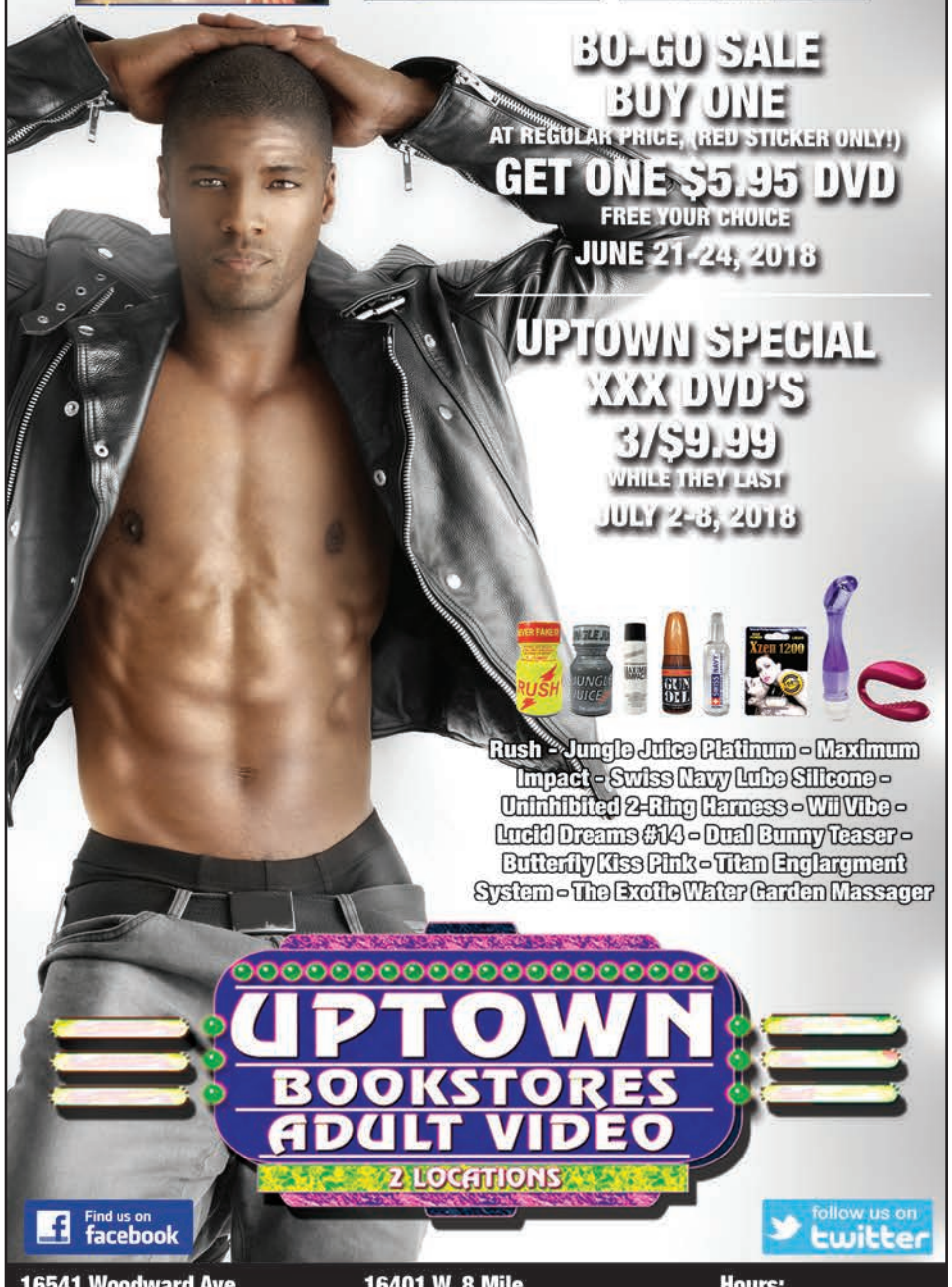

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Continued from p. 26

eVenti Verticali's Wanted June 19, 7:30 p.m. Aerial theater combines with video projections on a giant outdoor screen and concocts a mind-bending visual comedy extravaganza for all ages. Suspended in a world of animation, two Italian brothers hang from ropes and harnesses. Top of the Park, 915 E. Washington St.,Ann Arbor. 734-994-5999 info@a2sf.org info@a2sf.org https://a2sf.org/category/top-of-the-park/

Sam Smith June 22, 8 p.m. Sam Smith's sophomore album, The Thrill Of It All, was released worldwide on November 3 via Capitol Records. In support, Smith announced the North American dates for "The Thrill Of It All Tour." Little Caesar's Arena, 2645 Woodward Avenue,Detroit. 3133495777

Ann Arbor Summer Festival 2018 Main Stage Lineup Continues! June 22, 6:30 p.m. AT THE ILLUSIONIST'S TABLE: Hosted by the world-renowned Scottish mentalist/storyteller Scott Silven, 22 strangers will share an elegant candlelit 3-course meal as mesmerizing illusions complement everything from the cocktails to the dessert course. Ann Arbor Club, 103 E. Liberty, 3rd Floor, Ste 300,Ann Arbor. 734-764-2538 info@a2sf.org info@a2sf.org a2sf.org/events/at-the-illusionists-table-1/

Ann Arbor Summer Festival 2018 Main Stage Lineup Continues! June 28, 8 p.m. After winning the coveted top honor at the Thelonious Monk and Sarah Vaughan jazz vocal competitions, the 26-year-old breakout jazz singer, Jazzmeia Horn, is a talent ready to take her place alongside the best headlining Power Center, 121 Fletcher Street,Ann Arbor. (734) 647-3327 info@a2sf.org info@a2sf.org smtd.umich.edu/about/facilities/central_campus/power/index.htm a2sf.org/events/jazzmeia-horn/

Ann Arbor Summer Festival 2018 Mainstage Lineup Continues! July 4, 4 p.m. In their annual 4th of July appearance, America's foremost political satirists, The Capitol Steps, are here with this year's biggest stars—Mike Pence, Hillary Clinton, Vladimir Putin, Bernie Sanders, and those who were gone too soon—Sean Power Center, 121 Fletcher Street,Ann Arbor. (734) 647-3327 info@a2sf.org info@a2sf.org smtd.umich.edu/about/facilities/central_campus/power/index.htm a2sf.org/events/the-capitol-steps/

Kubat, Finlay & Rose in Concert! July 6, 8 p.m. The Detroit singer-songwriter trio Kubat, Finlay and Rose will mark their Ann Arbor debut performance at Michigan's historical folk venue, The Ark. Celebrate a night of harmony and story through song wit https://www.facebook.com/events/1507965139333102/ The Ark, 316 S.Main St.,Ann Arbor. 734-763-TKTS www.theark.org https://www.facebook.com/events/1507965139333102/

Editor's Pick

Paramore to take DTE Energy Stage

Formed in 2004, Tennessee-based band Paramore shot to fame with singles like "Misery Business," "Crushcrushcrush" and "That's What You Get." The group's most recent album "After Laughter" was released in 2017 and the band is in the midst of a world tour promoting it. On Friday, June 29, Paramore will be performing at the DTE Energy Music Theatre. More information can be found online at paramore.net/tour.

ART 'N' AROUND

The Residence: Contemporary Visual Art Exhibition June 29, 6 p.m. Come celebrate local emerging artists who not only create really cool pieces inspired by the city, but teach and mentor children in Detroit Public Libraries! Join us for Opening Night Friday and Panel Discussion Saturday. One event on June 30 at 3:00pm Holding House, 3546 Michigan Avenue,Detroit. jessica@projectart.org jessica@projectart.org www.holdinghousedetroit.com/

THEATER

eVenti Verticali's Wanted June 19, 7:30 p.m. Aerial theater combines with video projections on a giant outdoor screen and concocts a mind-bending visual comedy extravaganza for all ages. Suspended in a world of animation, two Italian brothers hang from ropes and harnesses Top of the Park, 915 E. Washington St.,Ann Arbor. 734-994-5999 info@a2sf.org info@a2sf.org https://a2sf.org/category/top-of-the-park/

Polyglot Theatre's Ants June 26, 4:30 p.m. Ants is an interactive roving performance which has giant ants bringing children together in a gentle and intriguing landscaping project. Gradually a world of meaning unfolds, illustrating the human desire for order. Top of the Park, 915 E. Washington St.,Ann Arbor. 734-994-5999 info@a2sf.org info@a2sf.org https://a2sf.org/category/top-of-the-park/a2sf.org/events/polyglot-theatres-ants-1/

Satori Circus presents "Stroke" June 29, 8 p.m. SATORI CIRCUS will perform a new original performance art piece titled, 'Stroke' at the Tangent Gallery / Hastings Street Ballroom. Also performing will be the theatrical rock performance group, The Haberdasher from Port Huron, MI. Tangent Gallery, 715 East Milwaukee Avenue,Detroit. 2484451277 https://www.facebook.com/events/252206855341425/

Matrix School of Theatre Summer Creativity Camps July 9-27, 9 a.m. Get ready for a great experience at Matrix School of Theatre's Summer Creativity Camps! Sign up today and work with a professional artist to write your own play and perform it in a safe, supportive,Matrix Theatre Company, 2730 Bagley St.,Detroit. 313-967-0599 info@matrixtheatre.org info@matrixtheatre.org https://www.matrixtheatre.org/ https://www.matrixtheatre.org/summer-creativity-camps

Disney's The Lion King at The Wharton Center July 11-22, 7:30 p.m. Giraffes strut. Birds swoop. Gazelles leap. The entire Serengeti comes to life as never before. And as the music soars, Pride Rock slowly emerges from the mist. THE LION KING, is making its triumphant return. Wharton Center, 750 E. Shaw Lane,East Landing. 517-353-1982 wharton@msu.edu wharton@msu.edu www.whartoncenter.com www.whartoncenter.com/events

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‘Encore:’ Sing Out Detroit Celebrates 10 Years

BY EVE KUCHARSKI

For the past decade, musically-inclined LGBTQ and ally Detroiters have slowly been catching on to Sing Out Detroit, the city’s inclusionary group choir. In honor of the group’s growth and longevity, they will be hosting their “Encore!” performance on Saturday, June 16, at Ferndale High School.

“This is the largest our choir has been. We actually have 50 members on stage with us now, and we started with four people in their basement,” said board member Laura Varga. “We are super excited to get folks to come and celebrate with us at the 10 year anniversary at Ferndale High.”

The group performs a variety of styles like swing numbers, jazzy songs and more. Brian Burnett, another choir board member said one of the choir’s great strengths is that it doesn’t require highly experienced members to join, just people with a passion for music and the ability to hold a note.

“We do have a standard to match pitch – we have to protect the experience for everybody. No one would be happy if they just couldn’t do it, but also protecting the singer who can’t sing from being embarrassed,” Burnett said.

“But the biggest thing is that you don’t have to be a proficient music reader to participate.”

And, Burnett added that the group allows for people to tailor their own experience, joining other groups within Sing Out Detroit.

“We do have small ensembles of the group of 50 people. Not everybody wants to do a swing choir style where they’re dancing around. So, we have a stand-and-sing choral group that does a little more proficient, more difficult music. Then we have another subdivision of the group — and people overlap,” Burnett said. “People can self-elect which groups they’d want to do. We don’t just stand and sing with folders and we have a bunch of different options for people to sing at depending on their interest level. We also wanted to make our shows entertaining, so we switch out the visuals.”

However, Burnett said his favorite part of being a choir member is that it has opened his mind to a variety of new perspectives.

“I’ve only been in the choir for four years and when I joined this choir I had a really different perspective on trans people. I didn’t know anybody trans and now I know three people,” Burnett said. “And so, even being a gay man, it has expanded my horizons into what’s in the real world. And, it helps people become comfortable in the world.”

Varga added that Sing Out Detroit’s inclusivity gives her hope.

“We are an LGBT and ally choir and we have a fair number of allies,” she said. “I think it really says something about the progress of our times.”

The event will be held at 7 p.m. Ferndale High School is located at 881 Pinecrest Dr., Ferndale. Tickets cost $15 in advance and $20 at the door. More information about the group can be found online at singoutdetroit.org

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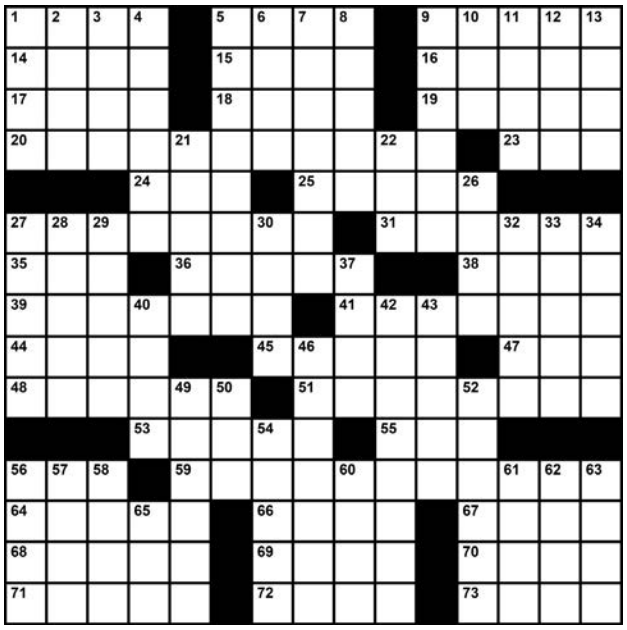

Movies with Happy Endings
Q Puzzle

Across

1 Game played astride stallions
5 Wistful word
9 One of Sheehan's irons
14 Arc on a Samuel Barber score
15 Pitchfork part
16 "___ told by an idiot"
17 Ward of "Once and Again"
18 Close by
19 Macbeth's taunt to Macduff
20 2004 movie about coming out to a Muslim mom
23 Prefix for "gate" for the Homophobe-in-Chief
24 Set fire to
25 Stephanie's actor-dad
27 Deniers in the Divine Miss M?
31 Moistens (one's shorts)
35 Went down on
36 Treasured violin
38 Mosque leader
39 Jonah Markowitz movie of 2007
41 1987 drama based on an E.M. Forster novel
44 Leaning erection site
45 Resell, as tickets
47 Bobby Orr's org.
48 Snippets from a Cukor film
51 Pretended to be openly gay?
53 "MacGyver" actor Dana
55 Disney doe
56 Arcing shot from Mauresmo
59 1996 comedy about Armand and Albert
64 Word in '60s club names
66 "Boys on the ___ "
67 Tinted
68 More in need of a lube
69 10 C-notes
70 Hathaway of "Bride Wars"
71 Kind of question
72 Coin for Kahlo
73 WWII weapon

Down

1 "Hey, over here!"
2 Bars for gay chefs
3 Humdinger
4 Figure in a Michelangelo fresco
5 When homophobia is okay
6 Willingly
7 Foot with three parts
8 Curlicue on a Q
9 Karen of _Will & Grace_
10 Hellenic vowel
11 "Latter ___ "(2003 film with a Mormon homophobe)
12 Bowl contents in "Oliver!"
13 Start of a rhyme about a tiger
21 Billy Bean did this to balls
22 Atomic energy org.
26 Golda from the land of the cut
27 Door attachments
28 Protestant work ___
29 "Legally Blonde" Witherspoon
30 Mercury and Saturn but not Uranus
32 Acid type
33 Peru's ___ Picchu
34 Enjoyed a cologne queen
37 Apple that isn't a fruit
40 Nathan of "Modern Family"
42 Bruce Wayne, for Batman
43 Flip over
46 A rifleman may shoot off with it
49 Southwest California city
50 U. of San Francisco, e.g.
52 Country houses, to Nureyev
54 Didactic story author
56 Noble title for Chablis
57 Shrek, for one
58 2014 Dutch coming-of-age drama
60 Fateful day
61 Em, e.g.
62 Dancer Kelly.
63 "East of ___ "
65 Mil. title of Stonewall Jackson

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Lon Horwedel, courtesy of The Kresge Foundation.

18 Neighborhood Groups Share $1.5 Million from Kresge for Projects Across Detroit

BY BTL STAFF

The Kresge Foundation announced last month that it has $1.5 million in grants for 18 new projects and is planning efforts to revitalize neighborhoods across Detroit.

The grants are the first to be awarded in the $6 million, three-year relaunch of Kresge Innovative Projects: Detroit.

In the city's Virginia Park neighborhood, vacant lots will become a new park with picnic tables and play equipment to enhance the bonds of community. In southwest Detroit, a renovation designed by youth, artists and entrepreneurs will create new retail space. In northwest Detroit, the sports, health and wellness facilities of North Rosedale Park will be renovated and updated. In the North End, a former speak easy and shoe shine shop will become a place for grassroots retail, community events and performances.

"Detroit's true revitalization means the broad revitalization of its neighborhoods," said Kresge President Rip Rapson. "That requires a multiplicity of tools and interlinked strategies. This relaunch of Kresge Innovative Projects: Detroit is rooted in the same principles as our recently announced support for the mayor's Strategic Neighborhood Fund, our operating support for community development organizations, our Hope Starts Here partnership with the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to make Detroit a city that puts children and families first and the full suite of our work in the city. We will continue to work with partners to make this broad revitalization a reality."

In addition to these and other implementation projects, Kresge's grants will support community engagement and planning for efforts including the renovation of an iconic former jazz club as a westside community hub, a wheelchair-friendly community education center in Jefferson Chalmers on the eastside and strategies to bring immigrants, refugees and native Detroiters together to envision neighborhood integration and revitalization on the west side.

More information can be found online at kresge.org.

Children's Hospital of Michigan Foundation Funds 51 Projects with $2.2 million

BY BTL STAFF

DETROIT — The Children's Hospital of Michigan Foundation has announced that in the second round of their 2018 grant cycle, funding for 51 projects totaling 2.2 million dollars has been awarded. While the Foundation remains committed to supporting Children's Hospital of Michigan and affiliates, 14 of these grant recipients are new community partners to the Foundation.

"As we continue our journey toward becoming a leading community foundation for children in Michigan and beyond, expanding our network of partners is key. These 14 new relationships will allow us to broaden our reach and make an impact on the health and wellness of more children and families," said Lawrence J. Burns, President & CEO, Children's Hospital of Michigan Foundation.

Through grantmaking and advocacy, the Children's Hospital of Michigan Foundation enables researchers and community organizations to fund services and research to fulfill its goal of advancing children's health. These efforts have totaled more than $40 million in grant funding since 2011.

Every year the Children's Hospital of Michigan Foundation awards new funding to a carefully selected group of applicants whose work supports the Foundation's Three Pillars: Community Benefit, Pediatric Research and Medical Education, as well as meeting its Five Focus Areas: nutritional wellness, abuse and neglect, injury prevention, mental health and oncology/cardiology.

The 14 new grant partnerships include:

Beaumont Health System – River Rouge H.S. Beaumont Teen Health Center - $50,000

Boys & Girls Club of Oakland and Macomb Counties – Connect Today! Program - $70,000

Ruth Ellis Center – Family Support Model with LGBTQ Youth in Foster Care - $50,000

University Pediatricians Autism Center – Autism Center Program Training - $39,883

Established in 2003, Children's Hospital of Michigan Foundation is the state's largest funder dedicated solely to advancing the health and wellness of the children of Michigan.

The Foundation will be holding a Community Benefit Grant Announcement reception on Wednesday, June 6 at 10 a.m. in the Fisher Building lobby. Please RSVP to Jill Nelson, who can be reached at 313-966-2022.

Meet Affirmations Volunteer Noah Cohen

BY BTL STAFF

Noah Cohen has been a volunteer at Affirmations since April of 2016. The LGBT community center has been receiving the support of volunteers like Cohen since its founding in 1989. Volunteers work throughout Affirmations beginning at their Welcome and Resource Desk, and extending through the youth programming, and even special events. In the following Q&A, Affirmations' Volunteer Cohen talks about his deep commitment to the Center.

What made you want to get involved with Affirmations' volunteer program?

LGBTQ+ centers have always been an important part of our community and I valued the community center in San Diego. After moving to Michigan I went back to school full-time, but once I graduated I knew I wanted to find something positive to do with my spare time, and volunteering at Affirmations has been a great way to do that. It's truly a great place to be a part of.

Why is Affirmations important to you?

Serving my country and community has always been important to me. It's why I joined the Navy and served for 5 and a half years, and why I continue to find ways to serve as a civilian. I also believe we should be responsible for the positive change we want to see in the world whether that's through volunteerism, activism or any other means. It's one thing to discuss issues, or be mad at current events, but it's another to find a way to do something about it. Volunteering at the front desk at Affirmations may not lead to world peace, but at least I can say I did something that will hopefully have a positive impact on at least one person's life.

Are you involved with any specific groups at Affirmations?

I am the co-facilitator of the LGBTQ+ in Uniform group at Affirmations, which meets the first Thursday of every month. We are a group of individuals who have served or are currently serving as police, fire, emergency medical personnel, and military. People in these careers often experience discrimination in the workplace and their personal lives, making it difficult to live out, and it can be difficult for others to understand their personal experiences. LGBTQ+ in Uniform is a safe space for those who have or are serving to express themselves.

What are you passionate about outside of volunteering?

Outside of volunteering I love to read. Most people who see me at the front desk probably know that since it's usually what I'm doing. I love sci-fi and horror books, particularly Stephen King. Reading a really scary book in daylight at the center with people around definitely makes it less intense.

Are you interested in volunteering at the center? Visit goaffirmations.org/get-involved/volunteer for more information.

Sephora Offers Makeup Classes for Trans and Non-Binary Community

BY DREW HOWARD

Sephora announced it will expand its diversity and inclusion efforts with new in-store makeup classes tailored for transgender and non-binary individuals beginning June 1.

The free class, titled "Bold Beauty for the Transgender Community," is another installment in Sephora's Classes for Confidence program, which features beauty workshops geared toward inspiring confidence and fearlessness in individuals facing major life transitions. Examples of other classes in the program include ones tailored for people re-entering the workforce as well as those undergoing cancer treatment.

"This 90-minute interactive class will enable clients of all gender expressions to discover techniques and skincare or makeup products that aid in the discovery of their own personal beauty style," said event organizers. "Taught by Sephora store instructors, some of whom have their own personal gender journey, each class is designed to help participants feel beautiful and confident through a specialized class curriculum."

So far, the Eastwood Towne Center Sephora in Lansing offered a class on Saturday, June 9, with another scheduled at the Somerset Collection in Troy for June 24 at 10 a.m.

Deanna Rodriguez, a spokesperson for Sephora, said it's the company's goal to continue offering the beauty classes past Pride Month.

"If there's strong interest, which we anticipate, they'll continue," Rodriguez said. "So this is not a flash in the pan situation, it's an ongoing program."

For those unable to attend the classes, Sephora announced it will also offer several how-to video tutorials led by transgender Sephora beauty advisors on the company's YouTube Channel, Sephora Stands. Video tutorials are expected to be uploaded during the week of June 4, according to Rodriguez.

Lilianna Reyes, interim director of Affirmations in Ferndale, says she hopes to attend one of the beauty classes in June.

"We are in support of it," Reyes told BTL. "There are trans people who do gender traditionally ... many trans women want to be feminine, and it's important everyone has different ways and avenues to do gender the way they want to. As a trans woman, I know what that's like to enter the world and want to be ultra feminine. You feel alone, and in navigating that space it's hard to ask people how to put on makeup."

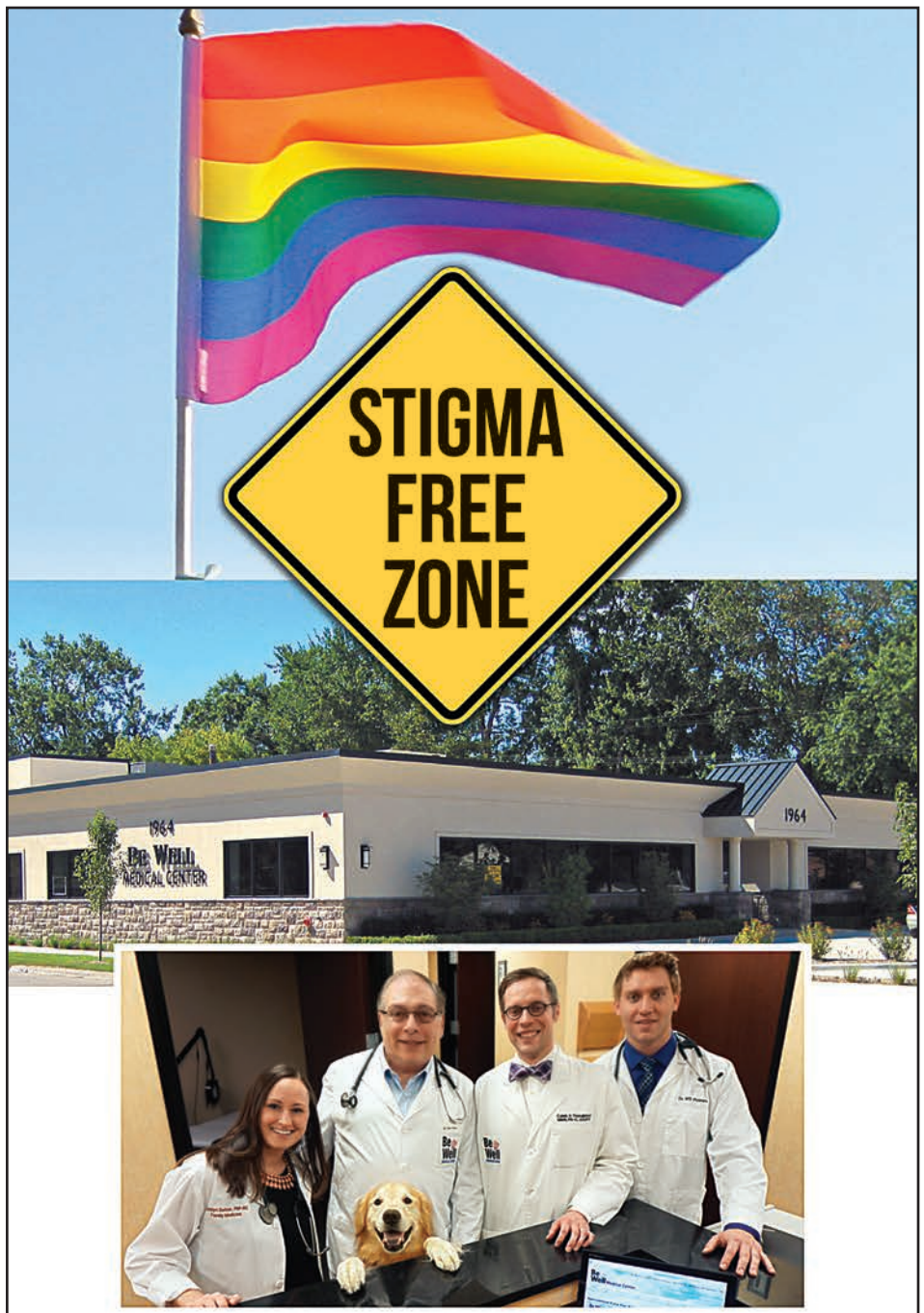
While responses to the class have been generally favorable, not everyone is excited about the new program. Jeynce Poindexter, Transgender Victim's Advocate for Equality Michigan, told BTL she refuses to support the initiative unless a trans woman is heading the launch.

"Oftentimes our community is targeted by companies and people who just want to exploit the fact of claiming to love and support the trans community, but really are only using us as leverage," Poindexter said. "I wouldn't understand nor appreciate a campaign launch geared toward the trans population that does not have a trans woman in creative control."

BTL reached out to Sephora representatives inquiring if the company placed any trans women in creative control of the program. This was their response.

"Sephora Stands has partnered with a number of national and local organizations that serve the transgender and non-binary community. We conducted interviews with these group leaders and engaged their members in focus groups to determine what they wanted in the class content," the response read. "Plus, asked both our employees and community partners what we need to include in terms of sensitivity training to best serve this audience."

For a visual of what the class will look like, check out the "Bold Beauty for the Transgender Community" on the Sephora Stands YouTube channel.



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